My Grandfather's Box

Joseph B. Bagdonas
College of DuPage

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"The map is not the territory," under Tom and Chair Prof's dictum and truer it could not be for every wiggle and lost corner straight and lakes never on the right side.

Tent anachronist in RV heaven-haven and motors replace feet in the most progressive scheme of evolution by loss of brain capacity or devolve — demolocate — either suffices.

Forest is untrdden and all wildlife in the shape of Native American — displaced myths, of land and field, only to drink to the demons of history. Turtle mounds can be spun to face any enemy. Carve a new head and face it capitolward for a nice change. Ojibway learned it wasn't the Dakots to scorn and how does Bob Mosomo sleep at night while listening to the Viking-Saints latest exhibition while he's listening for Gess lee ze day bwan in search of ancestor's bones.

(You see, they appointed Brave Bob to guard the site from evil-seekers and revenge-doers.) Now Mosomo stalks with axe in hand and ear to ground and Old Mortality in his palm. All is a watershed — not just a divide between Mississippi and Hudson, but Native and Interloper with nowhere to portage.

— Lee Kesselman

IF I GO
if I go to sleep here I will dream dreams bulging with unwelcome visitors
everyone but you if I lay awake here I lay alone

come and visit me somewhere will you?

— Kathy Corra

Bagdonas: My Grandfather's Box

MY GRANDFATHER'S BOX

by Joseph B. Bagdonas

I imagine there has been a time in everyone's life when they cherished a box of some kind. A certain special box for keeping secrets, or a box for souvenirs. Little boxes for hair pins, big boxes for marbles or pretty boxes for well read letters. There was such a box in my life. It belonged to my Grandfather.

The box was ordinary in shape, almost square. It was made of dark wood, probably cherry. The wood was deeply engraved with designs that intrigued and mystified me as a child. As the years passed and my intelligence grew, I was able to see the design had continued as the carvers imagination had expanded. Grandfather had made the box when a young man. It was his first carving and according to him, his last.

It would hardly qualify as an artwork, being crude in structure and primitive in design but none the less was very appealing to me. The box was heavily coated inside and out with a lacquer or shellac. Inside it were three smaller boxes, one on top of the other. They came out through the top, one at a time.

The large box locked the three little ones inside with a roughly made brass key, which hung on a nail in the kitchen.

During cold winter nights on the farm, the crackle of the kitchen fire could be heard above the sound of the wind outside. This created an intimate atmosphere which brought our family close together and provided a time after supper when Grandfather told stories in wonderfully expressive Lithuanian.

He would take the old brass key, open the box, and with the contents of the first small box spread on his lap he would begin a story. His stories were always different, but they were always connected with, or inspired by, the objects in the box.

The first little box contained an ancient bullet, a beribboned medal, a spoon and a piece of leather thong. Grandfather described how he acquired these things many times. Every time I begged for the "really true" story, he would settle down, eyes twinkling, and spin a story, diametrically different from the previous explanation.

I learned a great deal of the folklore and history of the people of Lithuania and Russia during these stories. Grandfather told of his days in the Russia Army, when he had served with the Cossacks and his boyhood on his fathers farm. He told of his first visit to a large city so vivdly I felt we had made the trip together.

He took each item from the box and held it until it was included in the story. The end would come after the last item was used in the tale.

As I think back, I know everyone in the family enjoyed his stories. The kitchen was always quiet save the ticking of the clock and Grandfathers voice drawing word pictures for us in his melodious Lithuanian dialect.

His stories were exciting, sad, dramatic or quite often laced with side-splitting humor. I remember the whole family rocking with laughter at some of the anecdotes. I know now the stories I considered mine alone were enjoyed by everyone.

If fortune smiled on us, Grandfather would weave a tale with the contents of the second box. This box contained a black stone as big as a robins egg, a gold tassel, some coins and a feather. The feather was that of an eagle, hawk, falcon, or duck, depending on Grandfathers story.

The third and last box was wreathed in mystery. Upon rare occasions Grandfather would let me handle it, shake it perhaps, but open it, never! My curiosity was so great that when alone in the house I would search everywhere for the box. Search as I might though, I never found it.
One evening, the box was out and Grandfather was about to start a story session when some neighbors dropped in. During the moment of welcoming, I relinquished myself to temptation and stole the box away. I hid it in the soft sandy soil of the garden. Back in the kitchen I found it impossible to spirit away the key while everyone sat visiting.

The next morning, before the family awoke, I took the key from its place and went to the garden. I dug confidently for the box where I had hidden it. It wasn’t there. I began to dig everywhere but no matter where I dug, no box. I panicked and nearly dug up the entire yard. I found nothing. In the course of my frantic digging I lost the key.

My apprehension was beyond belief. I knew Grandfather would notice the key missing. I knew I would have to face the music when asked about it and I would have to tell the truth, but how I dreaded it.

As time passed Grandfather made no mention of the matter. This bewildered me, for as weeks and months went by, the family teased me to no end about the missing box. Grandfather took no notice of this.

One day long after, while working the fields with him, I confessed to losing the box and key. He looked at me with an understanding smile and told me the box would be mine if I found it. Encouraged by his forgiveness, I asked what was in the box. He only said it would remain a secret until I found it and opened it myself.

His words occupied my mind from time to time but as I grew older there was school, work, dates and a world war to deal with. The matter of the box lost its importance.

During my service in the war, Grandfather died. When I returned to the farm I realized the secret of the little box would never be known to me.

As the years added to my age, I married and moved to a suburb of a large city. My family grew, and we visited the farm often.

On one occasion my son John, five years old, was playing in the front yard. We came out to sit on the porch after supper and noticed him digging in the soft sand of the garden. He was banging a toy shovel against something in the ground. Out of curiosity I walked over and was surprised beyond belief to find Grandfathers box there, with the old brass key in the keyhole.

I brushed away the dirt and picked it up. Its familiarity thrilled me. All the warm memories of my childhood and of my dear Grandfather came flooding back. I remembered his worn old hands as he brought the box to the kitchen. I felt again the warmth and contentment of our simple happy evenings.

The key worked hard in the lock, and I wondered wildly for a moment how the key and the box, lost separately, had come to be united.

After some effort I opened the lock and began to remove the small inner boxes. First the top one. It still contained the old bulletin, tarnished medal, blackened spoon and a shriveled and mildewed leather thong. My excitement mounted as I opened the second box. Just as I remembered, it contained a black stone, a tassel, some moldy coins and what was once a feather.

My hands now held the mysterious third box and with a determination built through the years, I opened it.

It was empty. Although I stood alone, I was startled by a chuckle. It was Grandfather’s chuckle, I was sure. I felt close to him again and I knew this little box would always remain one of my most precious possessions.

All these years my curiosity had burned with a great desire and now it was satisfied. I felt no disappointment. I was glad the box was empty for anything I might have found in it would not have satisfied me.

Its emptiness was like a drained glass, the drinker having already been satisfied.

— Shirley Morovec

**INTERMISSION AT THE BALLET**

_Bodies claim and interpret space with a potent grace, revealing in the circumstances of the evening’s performance._

_Fabric waves give way, luminescences betray._

_Intrude on harmonious interlude._

_A slab of light, blatant white,_

_enters unwrapt, Elements ignited_,

_severely expose a consuming repose_,

_before torsos unwrap, wrinkled lap._

_Breathing becomes normal, return to formal._

_Attire properly, according to visibility._

_Your movements halt silence’s assault._

_An island made of absent serenade._

_Bashful immobility, postponed agility until darkness induces the redress of a naked stage by studied personage._

_Each to our place an interruption to efface._

_Kimberly J. Kyp_